



## NEWS RELEASE

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## Gang Members Plead Not Guilty to Long Beach Murder

A Compton man and a teenager accused of fatally attacking another gang member pleaded not guilty yesterday, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Joe Anthony Avila (dob 8/20/89) was arraigned on one count each of murder and possession of a firearm by a felon. Jonathan Isaiah Buckner (dob 4/6/97), a minor charged as an adult, was arraigned on one count of murder. Both defendants are charged in case NA098580.

The felony complaint includes a special allegation that Avila personally and intentionally discharged a handgun, which caused great bodily injury and death.

Additionally, the complaint alleges that the murder was committed for the benefit and at the direction of, and in association with a criminal street gang, and with the intent to promote, further, and assist in criminal conduct by gang members.

The defendants appeared before Judge Laura Laesecke at the Los Angeles County Superior Court in Long Beach and their bail was set at \$2 million.

Deputy District Attorney Dean Bengston of the Hardcore Gang Division said on the afternoon of Feb. 10, Robert Proano, 22, was walking with his girlfriend near the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Myrtle Avenue in Long Beach when he was approached by the defendants.

The defendant asked the victim where he was from, at which point the teenage co-defendant punched Proano in the face, the prosecutor said. As the victim tried to fight back, Avila reportedly pulled out a gun and shot him. Proano stumbled to a median, collapsed and later died. The defendants then fled the scene.

A month later, authorities arrested Avila and Buckner in connection with the killing.

The defendants' next court appearance is scheduled for June 4 for a preliminary hearing setting at the Long Beach Courthouse in Department 1. If convicted as charged, Avila faces a maximum sentence of 86 years to life in state prison. Buckner could be given 50 years to life in state prison.

The case remains under investigation by the Long Beach Police Department.

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**About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 73,000 felony defendants and 113,000 misdemeanor defendants.